

We Didn't Go To The Snowball Together (but it's okay)

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Summary:

The Snowball of 1984 was magical, sure... but what about 1983?

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Author's Note:

So, this was written before season 2 was released, and thus contains the OT3 because I just... I had a lot of hopes, man.

Everything else should line up with canon. I've combed through to make sure. Hope you enjoy!

The brown carpet burned against her knees. She readjusted, biting her lip as she straightened his tie. Mike winced. "Does it really have to be so tight?"

"Well..." she loosened it a little, and saw relief flood his features. "Better?"

"Yeah. Way better. Thanks."

Nancy stood. She brushed off her dress—it was an older one, which their mom had let her borrow. *I wore it to my junior prom*, Karen had said with a small, sentimental smile. She had run her hands over the blue silk skirt, reminiscing about her glory days; hiding in the bathroom with Joyce Byers, throwing snowballs at Hopper, drinking a little too much...

Some of the beading was missing. It was still beautiful to Nancy, though.

"Are you sure you wanna go?"

Nancy watched as her brother brushed a comb through his hair for the thousandth time that day. He looked smaller, somehow—almost like he'd sunken into himself. But he was taller, and older in a way that she couldn't put her finger on. It had only been a month since Eleven, but he'd cried every night between then and now. Sometimes the tears were silent. Others, they were louder than thunderstorms and shook the walls of her heart.

Mike smiled. "I'm good."

“Mike...” she sat down on the edge of his bed, “no more secrets, remember?”

He froze, and slowly turned to her, eyes on his polished shoes. He met her gaze with a steadiness that startled her. “I’ll be fine. I have to do this, okay? If I don’t, then I’ll just keep wondering what it would have been like. With her. At all. I don’t know. Does that make sense?”

“A little,” her lips quirked up. “You look nice.”

Mike laughed. “So do you.”

“Nancy! Your... Jonathan and Steve are here!”

Their mother’s voice was both loud and shrill. Nancy shot up, quickly planting a kiss on Mike’s forehead and then darting out of the room. She saw them mid-way down the stairwell, standing alone, by the door in tuxedos—one rented and one bought, but equally wonderful.

“You both look dashing,” she pronounced, an unfamiliar happiness blooming in her stomach as she took them in; soaking it all into her memory, burning it there forever. *Her boys.*

Steve smiled in a lopsided sort of way. His hair was slicked back, and judging from the little nicks on his neck and jawline, he’d shaved in a hurry. “You look...”

“Beautiful, Nancy Wheeler,” finished Jon, cheeks tinged with pink.

Nancy flushed. She kissed them both on the cheek and accepted the corsages. “You know we’re only chaperones,” she reminded them.

Steve shrugged. “Yeah, but I mean... gotta make the most of the night, you know?”

Her mom re-emerged, smiling pleasantly. “Is your brother ready?”

“Yeah. I can go get him, if—”

“No, it’s fine,” Karen brushed her off, glancing once more at Steve and Jon, before dashing upstairs. “The boys are in the basement, if you could call them up!”

Nancy detached herself from Steve (when he had wrapped his arms around her, she didn't know), and fetched the younger boys. After much swearing, scattered trading cards and popcorn, and loud, thundering footsteps, they all found themselves in the foyer. Steve opened the door. "Okay, I have room for like, five in my car—"

"Take the station wagon," Karen offered. She handed over the keys. "You should be able to fit."

Steve grinned. "Thanks, Mrs. Wheeler."

"No problem," Karen ushered them out. Nancy was greeted with a bitterly cold night breeze. The driveway was covered in a light snow. "You guys have fun!"

The door closed so loudly the knocker shook. They piled into the car. Nancy sat up front, beside Steve. He flicked on the radio. "You guys ready?"

He received three "hell no"s and one "I guess".

Steve smirked and pulled out.

Music blared so loudly the walls of the gymnasium rattled. The decorations were as cheesy as they had been when she'd attended the very same dance; paper streamers, tinsel, silver and white balloons, and poorly made snowflakes.

Nancy pulled Steve and Jon a little closer to her sides, feeling oddly out of place. She had tried, desperately, to avoid this many people in one place for the past month. It was just too much to see all of their faces, some happy and some sad, but all oblivious to the darkness that dwelled in the shadows. It was destroying her psyche, chipping away at her sanity with every new, prospective day. The only anchors she had were to her left and right—and just ahead; the four boys were taking in the scene with a grimness she hadn't expected.

Will swallowed. "I'm gonna go, um... talk to Jennifer. See you guys."

He hurried off in the direction of the short blonde girl standing by the punch bowl. She was wearing a pink dress with little ruffles, and lit up at the sight of the younger Byers boy.

“Aw, look at them,” Nancy leaned her head on Jon’s shoulder. “That’s cute.”

Jon nodded pensively, eyes on his little brother. He looked almost bemused. Nancy furrowed her brow as she slowly put the pieces together. *Oh. Okay then.*

Steve nudged her. “Wanna dance?”

“Sure, why not?”

They made their way into the crowd, standing a little taller than most. Steve pulled her (too close) into him and began to slowly sway to the beat.

“Listen, I wanted to talk to you.”

Nancy hummed. “Shoot.”

“So, this whole thing with Jon...” he bit his lip, twirled her, and pulled her back in. “What is it about? I mean, I know we both invited him, and he was going anyway, but I just—what does it mean? Exactly?”

“It doesn’t have to mean anything,” Nancy said, trying her hardest not to grin. *I knew it.* “I mean, if you think it does, or something...”

Steve blushed. “Nance, come on.”

They were both silent for a moment. Nancy glanced across the gym and spotted Jon leaning against the bleachers. He looked quietly handsome. When their eyes met, he smiled, and she felt her heart skip a beat. *There’s definitely something. It’s not nothing.* “Steve,” she looked back to him, “do you have feelings for Jon?”

“W-what? I... um...”

“You don’t have to answer,” she added quickly. “I just—if you do, it’s

okay. I get it. *Really*, I do.”

Steve opened his mouth and closed it again, and somehow she knew what he had been about to say: *My dad would kill me*. She blinked at the cold, twisted thought, and pressed her face into his neck, playing with the ends of his hair. “Just think about it,” she whispered, but she didn’t think either of them knew exactly what she was asking him to think about.

Steve sighed. “Yeah. Think about it.”

The night progressed with a quickness she hadn’t expected. She danced with the both of them too many times, and by nine her feet were aching.

Nancy wandered over to the bleachers, shoes in hand. Everything had quieted down, some, settling into a peaceful lull. Little kids swayed to a sad song, and the rowdiest boys had already been ushered out of the building.

She lowered herself beside her brother. “Having fun?”

Mike raised his head from his hands. “Hmm? Yeah. Totally.”

She watched him for a moment, taking in his laboured breaths and undone top button. The rims of his eyes were red. “What happened?”

“I-I’ve just been thinking too much, I guess.”

Nancy nodded. She followed his gaze and found his friends in the thinning crowd. Lucas was dancing with some girl in a poodle skirt, Dustin was talking to Mr. Clarke, while Will lingered in the sidelines, eyes catching every detail.

“Do you want to go home?”

“No.”

“I’m sorry.”

Mike sat up. “For what?” She remained silent, and so he persisted.

“Nance, for what?”

She quickly wiped a tear away. “I shouldn’t have left you that night. If I had just stayed, El might still be here. I’m just... I messed up.”

Mike reached out and hesitantly took her hand. “You didn’t do anything wrong,” he said firmly. “You were just trying to save us.”

“I should have *protected* you.”

“But you *did*,” he was grinning, and she didn’t know why. “In your own weird Nancy Wheeler way.”

Nancy huffed a laugh. “You’re an idiot.”

“Sometimes.” He shrugged.

“We’re being too mushy, it’s gross. Aren’t we supposed to hate each other?”

“I thought we were done with that.” Mike stood. “Wanna break into Mr. Mason’s office and eat his chocolate stash?”

“Oh my god, Mike,” she dried her cheeks. “*Absolutely.*”